



## **Dulles Direct Newsletter**

**February 2013**

Welcome to the February edition of the Dulles Direct Newsletter. I know we barely made actually getting it out in February, but our budget discussions are now underway and it is a very busy time! There are major implications for the Dulles District in this year's budget which I've outlined below. I encourage you to stay tuned for updates on my [Facebook](#) page as things develop.

### **LEGISLATIVE UPDATES**

#### **FY2014 Budget**

#### **Major Dulles District Capital Projects Under Consideration**

I'll give a broader description of the budget situation below, but I want to start with the most interesting for many Dulles residents. As part of our budget, the Board of Supervisors passes a six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) which dictates what will be built and in what time period throughout the County. There are many projects competing for funds in the CIP, and we must stay within our debt capacity every year to maintain our AAA bond ratings. As a member of the Finance Committee, I have been actively engaged in the CIP process and the Committee has already made significant additions and deletions to the County Administrator's proposed plan.

Below is a list of the most significant Dulles District projects and their current status (as of this writing):

**Route 606 Widening** – Funded in FY14 for \$40 million. Negotiations underway with the state and MWAA for the remaining amount (roughly \$80 million). Significant progress has been made. MWAA has committed to fund a portion and continues in talks to fund their entire share. The Governor's Transportation bill which just passed the General Assembly also has proposed funding at a significant level. We are still working out the details, but there is major

momentum on the part of all three sides to get this done and address the most critical road need in our area.

**Dulles South Multipurpose Center Phase II (Indoor Recreation/Aquatic Center)** – Funded in FY14. \$19 million is coming from previous developer proffers. The cost to the County is \$17 million, which would need to be approved on a bond referendum. This is a shovel ready project—design is complete. The facility itself is self-funding—it is projected to be at 100% cost recovery. The nearest Loudoun facility is Claude Moore, but many residents use Fairfax County facilities. This is one of the most requested projects to me by citizens since I took office.

**Dulles South Multipurpose Center Phase III (Senior Center)** – Added to the CIP via my amendment in the Finance Committee on 2/26. \$675,000 for design in FY14 and \$5.525 million for construction in FY15. In order to not increase the County's debt load, my proposal reprogrammed the \$5.525 million from the \$33 million allocated for Hanson Park. We have a growing senior population in the Dulles area and the nearest full service senior center is in Cascades.

**Braddock-Pleasant Valley Intersection:** Funded in the CIP in FY14. Finance Committee approved my amendment to add \$200,000 to the project (for a total County contribution of \$1.2 million) to improve eligibility for state matching funds. The state matching request is under consideration. Preliminary design work has been completed by VDOT. Supervisor Mike Frey (Sully District—Fairfax) and I are evaluating two proposals by VDOT.

**Kirkpatrick West Fire Station:** Funded in the CIP in FY16 at \$12 million. New fire station to relieve Dulles South Station #19 and future Brambleton/Arcola Station #9. Developer proffered site.

**ES-27:** Funded in the CIP in FY15 at \$31.46 million. Will relieve overcrowding in the southern Ashburn/Brambleton area. Site has not been selected. Note that ES-21 and HS-6 are previously approved.

**MS-9:** Funded in FY15 at \$50 million. No site has been selected and it will serve the Ashburn/Brambleton area.

**MS-7:** Funded in FY17 at \$55 million, planned to be constructed on LCPS-owned property just west of John Champe High School.

**ES-28:** Funded in FY18 at \$36 million, will be constructed next to John Champe High School.

**Middle/Elementary School Field Irrigation:** \$2.1 million in FY14 to add irrigation systems to the 25 worst LCPS fields (see item on Athletic Fields below). Several are in the Dulles District or are used by Dulles area sports leagues. Irrigation will improve field quality and allow for more scheduled games at improved fields.

**Now, let me emphasize that this list is not final.** In fact, it has not even been approved by the Finance Committee yet. We will need to make significant cuts to our CIP and projects could

come out, and the full Board will have to approve these. (In other words, there is a long road ahead). But, these are my priority projects and I'm doing the best I can to get them funded.

I also want to emphasize—I have full confidence that the Board will live within our means with our CIP. We will not overspend or place ourselves at any kind of risk with the projects we approve. We are a rapidly growing county (Dulles District particularly), and we do have capital needs. We have carefully managed our finances so that we can afford to add facilities at the appropriate time.

## **General Budget**

On February 6, County Administrator Tim Hemstreet presented the proposed FY14 budget. The Board had directed him to devise the budget at an equalized tax rate, meaning that his proposal would not increase the actual amount paid by the average homeowner. The equalized tax rate is \$1.225 per \$100 assessed value (the advertised rate is slightly higher at \$1.23). This budget includes two cents dedicated for road improvements, which we believe will enable us to meet the requirements set forth in the new state transportation bill to fully access funding.

Overall revenue increased in the County by 3.5 percent. However, I continue to have major concerns about the impact of sequestration on County revenues. Furloughs and reduced government contracts will impact the spending ability of our citizens and could decrease revenue. For that reason, I will be taking a cautious approach to the budget across the board.

## **School Budget**

That cautious approach will extend to the school budget. The reality is that with 2500 new students coming into the system, LCPS needs more funding next year. There will not be actual “cuts” to the school budget (that term is incorrectly used by many). There may be further reductions from the School Board’s proposed budget increase. The School Board will be appearing before the Board of Supervisors on March 4 to present their budget.

The School Board did make changes to address rising health care and benefits costs. Their changes were a step in the right direction. We cannot ask the taxpayers of this County absorb a 16% increase in health care costs for LCPS employees. We raised the employee share for all other County employees, including Sheriff’s deputies and firefighters, by nearly eight percent this year, and there has to be an increase in the employee share on the LCPS side as well.

It is also not sustainable to have LCPS covering the full subsidy for health care coverage for employees working as little as 17.5 hours per week. The School Board did create a new, tiered system that matches the level of subsidy with the amount worked—as most other jurisdictions do. However, they did not apply the new system to any current employees. I expect the Board of Supervisors to examine that issue.

We all have an interest in excellent schools and teachers, and we are fortunate to have them in Loudoun. My responsibility is also to ensure an fair and equitable system for all County

employees. As things develop, I will provide more updates on the school budget and other budget issues.

### **Field Utilization Initiative Update**

In September, the Board approved my item to have Parks and Recreation improve the utilization and maintenance of county athletic fields. After several updates along the way, the final report came back to the Board this month. A survey of county leagues reports that leagues state we are overwhelmingly not meeting their need for playable fields. Over 49,000 youth play on county fields throughout the year, in addition to over 100 independent leagues. Several leagues have begun turning interested youth away due to lack of available playing space.

County Parks and Recreation staff ranked the playing condition of every LCPS field in the County that is available for scheduling. The scale ranged from one—unplayable—to five—excellent. Three county fields are ranked at one. All three of these fields are in the Dulles area. 68 fields are ranked at condition level two, which is poor. The Board will be considering an item in our budget discussion to transfer maintenance of these fields from LCPS to the County. It will cost an additional \$400,000 and should significantly improve playing surfaces. In addition, as mentioned above, the Board has tentatively placed \$2.1 million in our CIP for irrigation systems in the worst 25 fields.

To address the lack of restroom facilities at LCPS fields, the Board voted this month to allocate \$58,367 to immediately fund installation of these facilities which would then be reimbursed by the leagues using the fields. I appreciate the work of the Parks, Recreation and Open Space Board (in particular Kristen Reed, my Dulles appointee) and staff, and I thank my colleagues on the Board for supporting this effort so far.

### **Byrne's Ridge Field Lighting**

In order to gain more playing time for County and private athletic leagues, the Board approved installing lighting at Byrne's Ridge Park in Stone Ridge. The approved special exception (SPEX-2012-0034) will allow for lighting at the park's existing six fields until 10:00pm or for 15 minutes after the conclusion of the activity, whichever comes first. However, lighting will not be allowed when fields are not in use and lighting can only occur for county sanctioned events/activities. The fields will use state of the art lighting technology designed to decrease overflow light.

This item was thoroughly reviewed by the Planning Commission and several conditions of approval were added during the course of that review. As a result, new trees and fencing will be installed to act as a buffer. I understand the concerns of some residents that live close to Byrne's Ridge and I appreciate the work of the Stone Ridge HOA on this item. Ultimately, I think the solution that was reached was reasonable and I was pleased that the HOA was able to support it. My office will continue to closely monitor the installation of these lights and ensure that the conditions of approval are being followed.

### **Economic Development News**

The Board has recently debated the possibility of creating an Economic Development Authority (EDA) to function as a separate body dedicated to growing the County's commercial base. At the February 20 Board meeting, we voted to rename the current Industrial Development Authority (IDA) to the EDA and allow it to continue operating as usual without any additional Board funding. This allows there to be an outside entity in place should we want to fund it in the future for incentives for businesses to locate here or other economic development actions. We will continue to maintain the current structure and purpose of the Department of Economic Development (DED).

We are also discussing a policy that would create criteria for economic development incentives. I won't go into much detail here, but let me emphasize—any incentives we consider will have a specific return on investment. We are not considering tax abatements, but rather limited cash incentives to help match the Governor's Opportunity Fund and other state incentives. Any incentives approved by the Board will be paid for within a specified period by the resulting increase in revenue from the new business.

In other economic development news, DED has launched a new website called Loudoun SourceLink at [www.loudounsourcelink.org](http://www.loudounsourcelink.org). SourceLink compiles all important information for starting up your business in Loudoun in one place—grant and loan information, business license info, government navigation tools, and much more. This website is part of the wider Business Assistance Team (BAT) effort. The BAT brings together staff members from each relevant department to work together on commercial applications. The BAT is now helping businesses large and small navigate our regulatory process more quickly and efficiently.

Finally, Loudoun County just submitted a formal response to the General Services Administration (GSA) on the FBI headquarters relocation. We are competing for this project and have identified eight potential sites.

## **Property Tax Assessments**

Real property tax assessments have just been mailed out and are also available online. Overall, property values in the Dulles District decreased slightly by -0.55%. You may request a review of your assessment from the Commissioner of the Revenue's office Real Estate Division. The Application for Review is available [here](#) and should be filed by April 1, 2013. Once a resident files an appeal, it will be reviewed by a field appraiser. If you still do not agree with your assessment, you may appeal to the [Board of Equalization](#), which would schedule a hearing. To check your assessment online click [here](#).

## **DULLES DISTRICT UPDATES**

### **Greenstone Drive and Mineral Springs Circle Intersection**

Stone Ridge residents have been concerned that VDOT will require removal of the stop sign at Greenstone Drive and Mineral Springs. Over the past several months, I have worked with

VDOT to receive an exception from their normal requirements. I received a letter from VDOT earlier this month stating that they have granted my request, which allows the current stop sign to remain in place at the intersection of Greenstone Drive and Mineral Springs Circle. I'd like to thank Delegate David Ramadan for his help in bringing this issue to the attention of VDOT leadership.

### **Commission on Aging Appointment Filled**

I am pleased to announce the Board has confirmed my nominee for the Dulles District slot on the Commission on Aging, Arthur Skaer. Arthur has been a South Riding resident since its beginning in the late 1990s. He has been involved in the senior center for several years, including organizing a walking club and participating in the Northern Virginia Senior Olympics. I am grateful for Arthur's willingness to serve.

### **Gum Spring Library Grand Opening**



*Photo by Scott Stewart Photography*

Thank you to everyone who came out for the grand opening of the Gum Spring Library last Saturday. I was pleased to see so many of you there. Between 11 a.m. and 5 p.m., about 6,500 people visited the new branch, 14,000 library items were checked out, and 1,106 new library cards were created.

I am grateful for the hard work over the previous years to make Gum Spring Library a reality. I specifically want to thank the late Dulles District Supervisor Steve Snow, former Supervisor Stevens Miller, and all of the Friends of the Gum Spring Library, particularly Karen Montgomery, who has worked for many years on this project. Please be sure to stop by and check out a few books, as well as see the teen center, community meeting rooms, Wi-Fi access, and 60 public computer stations.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Tax Relief Seminar for Seniors**

Loudoun County Commissioner of the Revenue Bob Wertz will be offering free information sessions during March to familiarize residents with the eligibility criteria for the county's real estate tax relief program. Loudoun homeowners who are age 65 or older, or with disabilities, who are below established income and wealth limits may benefit from a reduction in property taxes. Qualified applicants must have a gross combined income less than \$72,000, and a net worth less than \$440,000. Up to \$10,000 in income of a spouse or relative residing in the home is excluded from the income calculation. Also, net worth does not include the value of the home and land up to 10 acres.

Workshops will be held at the following locations, where staff will be on hand to explain the tax relief program and answer any questions:

- Cascades Library—Monday, March 18 at 10:30am
- Ashburn Library—Wednesday, March 20 at 10:30am
- Purcellville Library—Thursday, March 21 at 10:30am
- Rust Library (Leesburg)—Friday, March 22 at 10:30am

No appointment or RSVP is necessary for the free sessions. Applications for tax relief are available [here](#). Residents may also call 703-737-8557 for more information.

### **Teen Job Fairs on March 16**

Need a summer job? Consider attending one or both teen job fairs in Loudoun on March 16. The Sterling Teen Job Fair will be held on Saturday, March 16 from 1:00pm to 3:00pm at the Claude Moore Recreation Center, 46105 Loudoun Park Lane in Sterling. Employers from various sectors will be there—entertainment, retail, catering, tech and more. The job fair is open to Loudoun County residents ages 16-19. This job fair is sponsored by Loudoun County Parks and Recreation and the Sterling District Supervisor. For more information click [here](#).

The Town of Leesburg and ProJet Aviation will hold a job fair on the same day from 12:00pm to 3:00pm at the ProJet offices located at 957 Sycolin Road SE in Leesburg. Come learn about businesses looking to hire in Leesburg and also receive resume writing and interview skills assistance. For more information email [dparsons@leesburgva.gov](mailto:dparsons@leesburgva.gov).

Closer to home, High Sierra Pools is hiring lifeguards for South Riding Pools. Check out their interview day on Friday, March 22 from 4-6pm at South Riding Center. Get more details about applying online and benefits by clicking [here](#).

## **Dulles Greenway Toll Rates Public Hearing**

The State Corporation Commission (SCC) announced that it will hold public hearings about the toll rates on the Dulles Greenway coming up this spring. The Loudoun hearings will be held April 9 at Loudoun Valley High School in Purcellville at 4 p.m. and 7 p.m.. The Richmond hearing will be July 18 at 10 a.m. at the commission's courtroom located in the Tyler Building at 1300 E. Main Street.

Delegate David Ramadan initiated the request for the SCC to look into the rates, as the SCC itself states that the rates must be “be reasonable to the user in relation to the benefit obtained; not materially discourage use of the roadway by the public; and provide the operator no more than a reasonable return as determined by the Commission.”

Anyone interested in submitting written comments must do so by July 9 by going to [www.scc.virginia.gov/case](http://www.scc.virginia.gov/case) or by mailing comments to Joel H. Peck, Clerk, State Corporation Commission, c/o Document Control Center, P.O. Box 2118, Richmond, Va., 23218-2118. The case number is PUE-2013-00011.

## **Liberty Elementary STEMmerday on March 16**

Liberty Elementary invites you to join them for the Third Annual STEMmerday, which is a Saturday dedicated to the exploration of STEM learning—Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math. STEM subjects are integrated into fun, hands-on activities that kids will love. Come program a robot, dissect an owl pellet, build a lunar lander, make a telescope, watch a planetarium show, launch a rocket, meet a mad scientist and much more. STEMmerday will be held at Liberty Elementary on Saturday, March 16 from 9:30am-2:30pm.

## **South Riding Proprietary Board of Directors Nominations**

Nominations are now open for two seats on the South Riding Proprietary Board of Directors. Any resident who wishes to be considered for election to the Board must submit a Candidate Profile Form and Nominating Petition. Each open seat on the Board is for a term of three years.

Candidate information may be [downloaded here](#) and is also available by contacting Town Hall at 703-327-4390 or [townhall@southriding.net](mailto:townhall@southriding.net).

***To be considered for nomination the original forms must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Friday, April 5, 2013.***

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